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Book Notes

by DICK LOCHTE

EVENTS—*Today:* 11 a.m.-6 p.m., the Esalen Institute and the Soviet Ministry of Publishing co-sponsor an exhibition of Soviet books on sports, physical fitness, psychology and preventive medicine at the UCLA School of Nursing, Louis Factor Building; through April 23. . . . 2 p.m., the Medina Foundation sponsors a Party for Poetry to benefit Electrum magazine, with Robert Peters and Laurel Ann Bogen, at 1389 Edgecliffe Drive; $10; 664-7667. . . . 2 p.m., Peggy Hazen of the County Museum of Art presents a multimedia celebration of art and literature at the San Vicente Library (715 N. San Vicente Blvd.). . . . 7 p.m., John Rechy, Malcolm Boyd, Alice Bloch, Clark Henley and others read at a benefit sponsored by A Different Light to aid the Gay's the Word bookshop in London at the Roof Garden of the Variety Arts Center (940 S. Figueroa); 688-0629. . . . 7:30 p.m., Robert Mezey, Suzanne Lummis and Denise Dumas read their poetry at BeBop Records in Reseda (18433 Sherman Way); $3. . . . 7:30 p.m., Janice Mall of The Times discusses free-lance opportunities for the California Writers Roundtable at Mercury Savings (10435 Santa Monica Blvd.); $3; 479-8719. . . . 8 p.m., Amos Oz ("In the Land of Israel") discusses Israel for the University of Judaism at Valley Beth Shalom in Encino (15739 Ventura Blvd.); 476-9777, Ext. 246.

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Monday: 9 a.m., Paul and Sarah Edwards ("Working From Home") appear on AM Los Angeles on KABC-TV (Ch. 7). . . . 12:30 p.m., Laurie Anderson discusses her "United States" with Studs Terkel on KCRW (89.9 FM). . . . 6:15 p.m., The Latin Studies Department and the Writing Center of Cal State L.A. sponsor a talk by Salvadoran writers Claribel Alegria and Manlio Arqueta in Lecture Hall 2 of Kings Hall. . . . 8 p.m., Amos Oz appears at Sinai Temple in Westwood (10400 Wilshire Blvd.); 476-9777, Ext. 246.

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Tuesday: 10 a.m., Nina Vida discusses her novel, "Scam," at Temple Israel in Hollywood (7300 Hollywood Blvd.); (818) 345-6111. . . . 7 p.m. the ABA Convention is the topic at the dinner meeting of Publishers Assn. of Southern California at the Velvet Turtle (2255 Sawtelle); $20; 772-4796. . . . 7:30 p.m., Betty Lasky talks about her "RKO: The Biggest Little Major of Them All" on the Diane Glazer Show on Group W Cable (Ch. 10); repeated Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

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Wednesday: 9 a.m., The Write Stuff, a daylong conference co-sponsored by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the P.R. Assn. of Southern California Colleges, with Norman Cousins, Jonathan Kirsch and, from The Times, Art Berman, Fred Holley and Martha Stephens, takes place at Pepperdine's Elkins Auditorium; 456-4138. . . . 10 a.m., Monique Raphel High speaks about her new novel, "The Keeper of the Walls," for the Temple Beth Am Sisterhood, at the Temple (1039 S. La Cienega Blvd.); 652-7353. . . . 2 p.m., authors Gregory Benford, Paul Alkon, George Slusser and Pascal Ducommun discuss science fiction at the Clark Library; 743-2775. . . . 4 p.m. Turner Cassity reads at UC Santa Barbara's College of Creative Studies, in Building 494, Room 136; (805) 961-2788. . . . 8 p.m., South African poet Lisa Cohen and Los Angeles poet Terry Dorn read at Galeria Ocaso in Silver Lake (3321 W. Sunset Blvd.); $3; 660-8084.

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Thursday: 2 p.m., Jean Burden reads her poetry in the Overseers' Room of the Entrance Pavilion at the Huntington Library in San Marino (1151 Oxford Road); (818) 405-2100. . . . 7 p.m., "Napoleon: Genius" is discussed at the Beaux Arts French Conversation Club meeting at the L.A. Press Club; reservations: 661-9333. . . . 8 p.m., John Kenneth Galbraith lectures at UCLA's Wadsworth Theater; 825-9261. . . . Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Galway Kinnell reads in the Hashinger Auditorium at Chapman College in Orange; (714) 997-6849. . . . 8:30 p.m., Exene Cervenka and Wanda Coleman celebrate their spoken arts album "Twin Sisters" with readings at Lhasa Club (1110 N. Hudson Ave.); $5; 461-7284. . . . 9 p.m., Vampira and Miri Day read at Anticlub (4658 Melrose Ave.); $5; 934-8150.

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Friday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., the Friends of the San Dimas Library host a book sale at the Library in the San Dimas Civic Center (Bonita and Walnut avenues); continuing through next Sunday. . . . 8 p.m., poet-critic Robert Peters and fiction writer Jamie Diamond read at Beyond Baroque in Venice (681 Venice Blvd.); 822-3006. . . . 8 p.m., Richard Meltzer and Nichola Manning read at the Works Gallery in Long Beach (2740 E. Broadway); 426-8254. . . . 8 p.m., Henry Rollins appears in a spoken word performance in celebration of his new book "2-13-61" at BeBop Records in Reseda (18433 Sherman Way); $5; (818) 881-1654. . . . 8 p.m., Marisela Norte and Lynn McGee read at the Woman's Building (1727 N. Spring St.); 222-2477.

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Saturday: 9 a.m.-noon, UCLA Extension offers a workshop on "Copyright: What Every Writer Needs to Know," at 2106 Rolfe Hall; 825-9415.

Send material for Book Notes, including poetry readings, to Dick Lochte, P.O. Box 5413, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405 no later than 10 days before issue date.

Rewards of the spy trade

CAREERS IN SECRET OPERATIONS by David Atlee Phillips (University Publications of America: $15; 93 pp.)

THE SPECIALIST: REVELATIONS OF A COUNTERTERRORIST by Gayle Rivers (Stein & Day: $16.95; 216 pp.)

Reviewed by Ruth M. Harmer/Carew

Job counseling can be expensive, so $15 may not be an unreasonable price to ask for a 93-page guide to "Careers in Secret Operations" by an authority like David Atlee Phillips, former chief of the CIA's Latin American and Caribbean operations. It offers both how-to's and reasons why—citing in addition to mundane lures like substantial salary, travel and retirement benefits, such psychic rewards as "the chance to face danger and lead double lives."

Experienced covert operators may receive much more. Gayle Rivers (pseudonym for his "protection") tells how rich rewards can be for even part-time careers with non-Communist governments and private corporations.

"The Specialist" costs more than "Careers," but then it is longer and delivers enough in the way of stabbing, shooting, strangling, bludgeoning, and bombing to satiate any appetite for violence.

"Careers" offers no invitation to murder or mayhem, rather surprising since the author of this recruitment manual says that the CIA's job appeal tripled after Seymour Hersh exposed the nature of the agency's operations in 1974 in the New York Times.

Opportunities are numerous—in the Defense, Treasury and State departments, the Drug Enforcement Agency, FBI and CIA in all its branches and directorates. And qualifications are held to be relatively modest—particularly for Anglo males. One essential requirement seems to be a skill as casuist, since governments and corporations want clandestine operators "of high moral tone" who are not fussy about the means by which they carry out their missions against "terrorists." Phillips acknowledges that the lot—sometimes unhappy—of a secret agent may involve bribery, breaking and entering, stealing documents, and taking even more desperate measures in order to gain HUMINT (i.e. information provided by a human being that can be sent back to Langley, Va.).

But, not to worry. Phillips cites as one of only two memorable "moral dilemmas" in his own career his having "lied to the Boy Scouts of America when filling out papers to become a scoutmaster."

That may be going a bit far for a man of his background. Recently, Phillips' $200-million libel suit against Donald Freed and Fred Landis, co-authors of "Death in Washington," suffered a setback. The cause of action was the book's charge that Phillips knew in advance of the plot by the Chilean secret police (DINA) to murder Orlando Letelier, former ambassador to this country. In an order handed down a few months ago, U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Jackson held that among the things "established as fact" with the "jury so instructed" are that while in the CIA Phillips "specialized in propaganda and the planting of false information in the media" and that he "had both a motive for assisting, and the means to do so, in the concealment of any complicity of DINA in Letelier's slaying."

In contrast to Phillips' modest reluctance to discuss trade secrets of a personal nature, Gayle Rivers sings an uninhibited song of himself. And does he contain multitudes!

He claims that he looks like a conservative businessman, as befits the head of a flourishing aviation company and the successful merchant of arms and military services that he is. But, that is a case of cream masquerading as skimmed milk. For beneath the well-trimmed hair and in the neatly pressed suit is a Renaissance man brought up to the minute. A former crop-duster and ANZAC fighter in Vietnam, he is a skilled pilot, an underwater demolition specialist, a jet-fighter instructor, an electronics expert, a racing driver, a reserve officer, a fitness freak and the polylingual leader of a small foreign legion—to cite a few IDs. He gets his adrenaline rushes from his murderous "counterterrorist" missions, he says, but points out that he is not the kind of man who picks up a cause without a cash-and-carryout agreement in advance, including the down payment.

He says that "The Specialist" was written for love, not money: to call public attention to the "need" for highly specialized strike forces like his own to deal with terrorist fanatics.

No doubt, there will be readers of a suspicious bent, however, who will say that this collection of mindless stories of simple plot, crudely drawn characters and quick change of scene—from England to Spain to Greece to Egypt to Iran to northern Ireland to Louisiana—could have been written by: (a) an admirer of both Mickey Spillane and Robert Ludlum, (b) a 1985-model Walter Mitty or (c) a commercial writer hoping to strike it big with a TV series.

Both books come highly recommended. In a letter accompanying the bound galleys, the president of Stein & Day said that a seven-and-a-half-hour interview with the real Gayle Rivers was enough for him to get his company to rush into print with the book. He hoped that the Los Angeles Times would allocate front-page space to it. Former officials of the FBI, Marine Corps and CIA, including Richard Helms, the former agency director who was involved in the Watergate cover-up, have nice things to say about "Careers." Helms thinks "It fills a gap which has been yawning for years." It should be a busy spring and summer for recruiters in secret operations.

Harmer/Careu is an English professor at Cal Poly and the author of "American Medical Avarice."

Letters

A Critic's Critic

I am writing to correct several inaccuracies in David Van Houten's capsule review in the Sunday, March 31, Book Review. Let us begin with the book's title, which is properly "The Merchants' War" (*not*, as Mr. Van Houten had it, "The Merchant's War"). Moving right along his slug line to his next error, the author's name is Frederik (no "c") Pohl; I can understand Mr. Van Houten's confusion—he must have assumed the publisher had made an error in the printing of the book, which he (Van Houten) felt necessary to correct—which he did, four times in the space of one paragraph. Next, in referring to Mr. Pohl's classic 1953 prequel, "The Space Merchants," Mr. Van Houten neglected to mention the co-author of that book, the late C.M. Kornbluth.

SHERRY M. GOTTLIEB
Owner, A Change of Hobbit bookstore
Santa Monica

A Little Sweet Talk

For those readers who shared my frustration at not being able to conduct the sugar experiment referred to in Richard Feynman's "Surely You Must Be Joking, Mr. Feynman" (Book Review, Feb. 24), a number of helpful closet sugar-crackers, including the senior research fellow at Hughes Labs, both called and wrote me to explain: "Please don't disbelieve Prof. Feynman about the luminescence of sugar crystals (it was even documented in Science American not too long ago). Hint: Wint-o-Green Lifesavers (preferably more than one in the mouth at a time) chewed in front of a mirror in a darkened room. Immense fun—a faithful Book Review reader." The senior fellow warned that, "unless your crowns are in good condition," you might insist on having children do the actual chomping for you. Also, wait long enough for your eyes to adjust to the darkness.

KENNETH ATCHITY
Los Angeles

For It Was Mary. . .

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, as part of its ongoing research, is attempting to identify individuals who may have been helped in pre-World-War-II Austria by Dr. Muriel Gardiner, an American citizen who was studying medicine in Vienna in the 1930s and was involved with the anti-Fascist underground. She used the code name of Mary and offered her apartment as a safe house for individuals opposed to the Nazis. Anyone with information is asked to please contact Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Associate Dean, Simon Wiesenthal Center, 9760 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles 90035 (553-9036).

RABBI ABRAHAM COOPER
Associate Dean
Simon Wiesenthal Center
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